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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4295
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 9493
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 3004
RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNS/COMSOCOPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T MANILA 005017

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STATE FOR EAP, PM, S/CT, AND EAP/MTS
USPACOM ALSO FOR FPA HUSO AND J5
SECDEF/OSD/ISA/AP (TOOLAN/BAILEY)
JOINT STAFF/J5 (WILKES/ROBINSON/CLEMMONS)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/15/2016
TAGS: PTER MARR MASS MOPS MCAP PREL RP
SUBJECT: DECEMBER 15 UPDATE ON JOLO OPERATIONS

REF: MANILA 4934 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: (U) Pol/C Scott Bellard
for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C/REL AUS) The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) continues its pursuit of senior Abu Sayyaf Group and Jemaah Islamiyah terrorists on the island of Jolo. Fresh troops from the Lanao del Sur-based 2nd Marine Brigade have arrived in order to sustain the operational tempo, which includes an ongoing series of raids and sweep-and-clear operations in eastern Jolo. The AFP has suffered 22 killed and 103 wounded since the August 1 onset of "Operation Ultimatum." According to AFP estimates, it has killed 31 terrorists and wounded 21 others.

¶2. (C/REL AUS) A robust civil-military operations program is a principal part of the AFP's Jolo campaign. On December 9, the 2nd Philippine Marine Brigade and the 3rd Philippine Marine Battalion Landing Team, backed up by U.S. Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) troops, conducted a medical civic action program (MEDCAP) in the village of Pitogo in the Kalingalang Caluang region of southeastern Jolo -- an area of known ASG/JI activity. The joint MEDCAP, the first in the area, treated 715 patients. In an unprompted testimony of appreciation and support, members of the local community hand-delivered lunch to each participating AFP Marine and U.S. soldier.

¶3. (C/REL AUS) The mayor of Panlima Estimo, a strategic village straddling the isthmus linking east and west Jolo, has approached the AFP asking for engineering and other civic action programs for his municipality, similar to those in nearby Panamao. Brigadier General Raphael, the Task Force Comet commander, told U.S. counterparts that he intends to seize the opportunity and make Panlima Estimo "a poster child" for civil-military operations. Winning the support of the population would allow the AFP to control the area better and effectively stop the ASG/JI from shuttling back and forth from the eastern and western halves of the island.

¶4. (S/REL AUS) The Philippine Navy's maritime cordon, backed up by U.S. intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support, remains in force around Jolo, with over 4300 maritime interdictions since the beginning of "Operation Ultimatum." Intelligence reports indicate that the blockade has had a decided impact on ASG/JI operations. Recent reporting suggests that the ASG/JI may try to attack some of

the vessels maintaining the cordon.

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